

A DAZZLING goal by Bobby Davies — his first ever for the club — kept Wycombe Wanderers in with a chance of the Rothmans Isthmian League title when he scored a dramatic overhead winner to pip Tooting and Mitcham at Sandy Lane on Saturday.

Bob's winner came just three minutes from the end of an exciting game that saw Wycombe produce a display of guts and character that fully justified this victory.

Everything now rests on next Saturday's top of the table games. Enfield, 1-0 home winners over Sutton on Saturday, travel to the Blues' local rivals Slough Town. Dagenham have to play Tooting home and away while Wanderers are at home to Dulwich Hamlet who look doomed to Division Two.

By STUART EARP Tooting and Mitcham 2, Wycombe Wanderers 3

Enfield are a point up on Wycombe while Dagenham, with a game in hand on the top two, are six points adrift. So if Wycombe beat Dulwich and Enfield either draw or lose at Slough, the title will be the property of Wanderers for the fifth time in seven years.

After Tuesday's controversial 3-2 reverse at Walthamstow, when they lost Alan Phillips at half-time, Wycombe had to beat Tooting to stay in the championship race. It was a tall order, especially as Phillips was out of the side and is almost certain to miss the rest of the season with a broken nose and damaged eye.

Facing the Blues were the league's top goalscorers, with 77 to their credit this term including five the previous week against Hitchin. It would have been a severe test for the usual Blues back four and so the performance of the reshuffled defence deserves special credit. Bob Davies switched to centre-back as expected but it was John Priestley who went to left-

back while Gavin Fraser stayed in midfield.

As well as scoring the winner, Davies had a fine game at the heart of the defence where Keith Mead partnered him with a marvellous performance. Priestley, meanwhile, struggled in the foreign position, giving away too many free-kicks. In midfield both Fraser and Graham Mackenzie gave 101 per cent which made up for Mick Holfield's disappointing game. The two youngsters challenged, tackled and pressured for 90 minutes and still found time to play some enterprising passes upfield where Ian Pearson was again the pick of the three. He was a constant danger to Tooting's defence and scored a fine goal to bring his tally to 41.

JUNEMAN BOOKED

Tooting looked the more composed side in the early stages and they deserved their 17th minute lead given them by the skilful Alan Ives. Priestley headed the ball to the former Amateur International who volleyed a drive into the corner with John

Maskell seeing the ball too late.

Dave Juneman was booked soon afterwards for kicking the ball away from a Wycombe free-kick. Most of the fouls, however, were being handed out by Wanderers which kept the pressure on their defence. A stray pass gave Ives another chance for Tooting but he was deprived by a brilliant Maskell save.

At the other end things were looking bleak for Wycombe. They were unable to get into any rhythm and seemed to be lacking in confidence. They improved during the last quarter, however, and hit back to level before half-time in the 38th minute. Paul Birdseye's long throw was nodded on by Mead and Howard Kettleborough lunged to head past keeper John Dunn.

That must have given the Blues a shot in the arm for they began the new half with new heart. Tooting, so dangerous earlier in the game, seemed to lose interest for a while and allowed the Blues right back into the match. Wycombe should have gone ahead after only two minutes when

Pearson headed on Priestley's throw to Holfield who accelerated past a defender and was faced only by Dunn. But Mick seemed to freeze for a second and then drove harmlessly wide.

Tooting's casual attitude was punished in the 54th minute, however. Fraser won the ball in midfield and pushed it through to Pearson. He bulldozed his way past two defenders and gave the goalkeeper no chance with a fierce shot into the top corner.

The second goal did Wanderers the world of good and roared on by the excellent support of their fans, they oozed confidence as they sprayed the ball around. Pearson almost made it three after 65 minutes before he was brought down with no free-kick given. There were also loud appeals for a penalty when a Tooting player handled.

BODY BLOW

Then Wycombe took a body blow when Tooting pulled the score back to 2-2. Maskell could only parry Derek Casey's drive from 15 yards and the ball bounced loose for Ives to rap home the equaliser.

Tony Horseman replaced Evans with ten minutes to go but it seemed Wycombe would have to be content with a point. Juneman, like Ives, had a 'goal' disallowed in the closing stages while Des Dennis was only a yard wide with a shot on the turn.

Closest Wanderers came to a goal was from the boot of the veteran Horseman in the 85th minute. He curled a free-kick around the defensive wall but Dunn had the spot well covered at the foot of the far post.

OVERHEAD KICK

Two minutes later Wanderers won a corner — their last chance, surely, of a winner. Horseman's flag kick was half cleared to Mead who got got up well to head back across goal where Davies launched himself into a spectacular overhead kick that left the goalkeeper and the covering defenders helpless on the line.

It was a triumph for Davies who has been itching to score in these closing stages of the season. It was triumph for Wycombe Wanderers to pull off one of their finest victories in a long time.

TOOTING: J. Dunn; T. Ford, W. Smith, S. Grubb, R. Green; A. Barreclough, J. Keefe, D. Casey; D. Dennis, D. Juneman, A. Ives. Sub: D. Clapton (not used).

WYCOMBE: J. Maskell; P. Birdseye, K. Mead, R. Davies, J. Priestley; G. Mackenzie, G. Fraser, M. Holfield; I. Pearson, H. Kettleborough, D. Evans (Sub. A. Horseman 80 mins).

Referee: G. Prevett (New Malden).
Half-time: 1-1. **Goalscorers:** Tooting — Ives 2 (17, 71), Wycombe — Kettleborough (38), Pearson (54), Davies (87).